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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA-GEORGIA: DAS BRYZA CONVERSATION WITH
RUSSIAN DFM KARASIN, OCTOBER 6

Classified By: AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

1. (C) DAS Matt Bryza and Ambassador called on Russian DFM Grigoriy Karasin October 6. Karasin said Russian patience with Georgia was at an end, and catalogued Russian views of the worsening relations, culminating with the arrest of Russian soldiers immediately after NATO offered Georgia Intensified Dialogue. Bryza said the U.S. views the same events differently, seeing Georgian attempts at negotiation over Abkhazia and South Ossetia stymied, while Russia extends its hold over the regions. Karasin demanded a UNSC Resolution condemning Georgia for its July operation in the Kodori Gorge. Bryza rejected this, noting that our blunt messages to Saakashvili are best kept private. Bryza said Georgia's frustrations with the peace negotiations are understandable, and old formats were not producing results. Karasin saw no need for new formats. Bryza called for renewed Russian-Georgian dialogue; "Not today," Karasin answered. End Summary.

Russian Perceptions, U.S. Perceptions

2. (C) Karasin led off by saying Russia's patience had come to an end. The sanctions imposed thus far were just the beginning of Russia's reaction. He ran through a list of perceived Georgian transgressions:

-- a Georgian parliamentary resolution on Russian peacekeepers (18 July, follow-up to February's action);

-- Georgia's operation in the Kodori Gorge (23 July), which Karasin accepted that the U.S. did not pre-approve, but he regretted the lack of international reaction;

Followed, after NATO offered Intensified Dialogue, by:

-- Saakashvili's UNGA speech;

-- Saakashvili's visit to Kodori, renaming it "Upper Abkhazia;" and

-- the arrests of Russian officers.

3. (C) Bryza responded that the U.S. views the same events differently. He stressed that the USG and he personally have worked hard (and with some success) to moderate Georgia's behavior. With regard to the arrest of officers, such spy allegations are common; the U.S. criticized Georgia's provocative handling of this case, which should have been managed quietly, as is the norm; but the U.S. had not egged the Georgians on. Similarly, it is Georgia's choice to pursue both reunification and NATO accession, though Georgia must prioritize to ensure that the way it pursues one goal does not undermine the other. Karasin interrupted that

re-establishment of territorial integrity demands a responsible leader and the practice of international norms of behavior internally and to neighbors; both are missing in Georgia. By hurrying to resolve the conflicts, Saakashvili had "buried" Georgia's territorial integrity. Karasin reiterated that the "cup of Russia's patience has overflowed," and future developments depend on Georgia's actions.

14. (C) Bryza continued with his response, noting a good meeting he had held in November, 2005 with MFA 4th CIS Department Director Kelin and Special Negotiator Kenyaikin. They asked Bryza to persuade the Georgians to return to the 3-part structure of a peace plan presented at the 60th UNGA. He did. For one year he had gotten Georgia to shift its focus to the first two parts of the plan, on demilitarization and economic rehabilitation, leaving a political resolution for later, as Kelin and Kenyaikin had requested. Nothing came of this. PM Noghaidei had tried to present the Georgian plan to South Ossetian leader Kokoity, who refused to meet Noghaidei. A Joint Control Commission meeting scheduled for Vienna was suddenly shifted to Moscow -- and the Georgians felt tricked.

15. (C) Karasin claimed that the shift was one of his first acts on becoming deputy foreign minister. He felt strongly that agreed formats must be maintained, which meant "avoiding Brussels and Vienna" (i.e., upgrading the EU or OSCE role). It also meant not insulting the Russian peacekeepers. The UN report will show just who had violated the 1994 agreement. The report would make the debate on UNOMIG renewal "interesting." The U.S. and Russian representatives had been unable to agree. Russia needed a substantive resolution with stress on cease-fire violations; a technical rollover or

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failure to stress Georgian violations would be unsuitable. Karasin said he did not understand U.S. reluctance to allow Abkhaz "Foreign Minister" Shamba to come to the UN to give his point of view.

16. (C) Bryza shifted the conversation back to the way the U.S. views the issues. He has been clear with Saakashvili: if Georgia uses force or stumbles into a conflict, Saakashvili will find himself alone, blamed by the international community for recklessness. The U.S. wanted to foreclose the option of using force and made it clear to Saakashvili and his defense team there was no way Georgia could succeed in South Ossetia militarily. But Georgians are frustrated. When -- on Bryza's advice -- the Georgians met the Russian requests laid out last November by Kelin and Kenyaikin, they got nothing in return but increased participation in the South Ossetian "government" by Russian officials, unification of South Ossetia's telephone system with Russia's, more Russian broadcasts into South Ossetia, plans for a new Russian gas line into South Ossetia, more Russian passports issued to South Ossetians, and claims that Russia was obligated to defend these (instant) Russian citizens. The Georgians viewed their patience as being rewarded with Russia trying to grab more in South Ossetia. ID was part of an effort to keep Georgia calm on the peace processes -- things could have been worse. Bryza saw his job as maneuvering the Georgians psychologically into a better place for dealing with the conflicts peacefully. He cannot succeed if all the Georgians see is a brick wall with no hope of a solution.

Russia Wants U.S. to Endorse Its Blunt Message to Georgia

17. (C) Karasin replied that whatever messages the U.S. and Europe had given Georgia in the past, now is the time to be more blunt. Now is the time for responsibility. There is no brick wall -- Russia is prepared to talk, its intentions serious. But all depends on Saakashvili's behavior; dialogue does not mean a "simple p.r. campaign" for Saakashvili.

¶8. (C) Karasin called for "substance" in a UN Security Council Resolution extending the UNOMIG mandate in Abkhazia. It must condemn the Georgian operation in Kodori, violations of the Cease-Fire Agreement of 1994, and any use of violence. Karasin hoped Russia and the U.S. were in the same boat on this. Bryza replied that we were in the same lake. He reiterated that we are trying to calm the Georgians down. They have every right not to want foreign troops on their soil; the PKF needs to be internationalized. The Georgians need to see a light at the end of the tunnel. We need to unfreeze the conflict.

¶9. (C) Regarding the UNSCR, Bryza said, the U.S. position will not allow criticism of Georgia's police operation in the Kodori Gorge in principle; the Kodori is sovereign Georgian territory, and according to Moscow's and Washington's own policies of supporting Georgia's territorial integrity, Tbilisi has a right and an obligation to eliminate organized criminal organizations and administer to Georgian citizens in the Upper Kodori. Karasin protested that tomorrow the Georgians might apply that same principle to the rest of Abkhazia. Bryza said the cases were different. Tbilisi had been careful to avoid military confrontation with Abkhaz forces, and had carried out the operation only in the Upper Kodori, which neither Sukhumi nor the 1994 Moscow Agreement ever claimed to be under Abkhaz control. The U.S. and the international community would sharply criticize any armed actions Georgia might take outside the Kodori. But the Georgian Government made clear it had no intention to undertake any such actions, which contrasted with incendiary statements that had emanated from Sukhumi. With regard to an Abkhazia settlement, Bryza stressed the need for a political compromise that reconciles territorial integrity and self-determination. Bryza said he never tells (Abkhaz "President") Bagapsh or ("Foreign Minister") Shamba that they have no right to aspire to self-determination, but he does stress the need to earn legitimacy, which cannot be won through a referendum in which 200,000 to 300,000 Georgian IDP's are dislocated and disenfranchised. The best option, Bryza continued, is for Abkhazia to achieve maximal autonomy within a unified Georgia. What is needed in a UNSCR, Bryza concluded, is a condemnation of all violations and a call for calm and for confidence-building measures.

¶10. (C) Karasin reiterated that a UNSCR cannot be a "toothless" rollover. He said all must listen to what the Abkhaz and South Ossetians have to say. Karasin demanded that NATO consider the conduct of a prospective member, and demanded that NATO's Riga Summit issue some type of criticism of Georgian behavior in the Kodori Gorge, absent which, "we will draw the necessary conclusions." Noting that this

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sounded like a threat, Bryza asked what those consequences would be. Karasin replied the Russians would "need to think about that."

Dialogue: "Not Today"

¶11. (C) Bryza urged the Russians to talk with Georgia. Karasin rejected "contact for the sake of contact." That is why a UNSCR must take a blunt position that would be a "cold shower" to Saakashvili. Bryza said there is a right way and a wrong way to be blunt, and a UNSCR is the wrong way. Karasin replied that such a resolution would make Georgia understand that the international community is united in demanding responsible behavior from Georgia. Bryza reiterated that Georgia cannot be left to feel as though the international community is sitting idly by while Russia is taking steps to draw Abkhazia and South Ossetia further into its orbit. We need to find a way to make progress together. For example, the JCC on South Ossetia is not designed to negotiate a political settlement. It is useful for the first two parts of the Georgian peace plan the Russians had asked

Bryza to embrace (e.g., demilitarization and economic rehabilitation), but not for the third part, (a political settlement) -- a new mechanism is needed for that. In Abkhazia, the CIS PKF performs a useful function. But its mandate is not to fight crime, and reducing crime in the Gali District of Abkhazia is essential to allowing for the return of Georgian IDP's. For this reason, the Western Friends were calling for an international police force in Gali.

¶12. (C) Karasin replied that he saw no need to create new mechanisms, which might destroy what has been accomplished so far. Georgian negotiator Antadze had laid it on the table: the Georgians want to destroy the JCC and replace it with a new mechanism. Bryza said that we should not destroy what is useful, but we need a mechanism to achieve what the current format is not designed to do. Russia could help by backing a special economic zone connecting North and South Ossetia to the Black Sea via the Roki Tunnel and Georgia's regions of Mingrelia and Guria -- this should calm many of their fears. Karasin said we could the idea of such a zone opened, and build on the momentum of the OSCE's Donors Conference for South Ossetia in Brussels last June.

¶13. (C) Bryza reiterated a call for Russian-Georgian dialogue at perhaps the level of Prime Ministers. "Not today," Karasin replied. "It all depends on Georgian behavior -- Georgia needs to think twice in the future." Bryza said the Russians have made the Georgians nervous; "We're not calm ourselves," Karasin replied. Bryza asked whether we could choreograph some steps to pull Georgia and Russia back from their confrontation. "We'll think about it," Karasin said, "But not today."

Shamba Visa and Next Steps

¶14. (C) Karasin pressed a second time for the U.S. to issue Abkhaz "Foreign Minister" Shamba a visa to attend an Arria-format discussion of Abkhazia at the UN. Bryza suggested that Russia and the U.S. consider Shamba's appearance at the UN in the context of a possible UNSCR that reflects the text agreed by the Friends of the Secretary General the previous week in Berlin, without a condemnation in principle of Georgia's operation in the Kodori Valley, but with criticism of specific Georgian (and Abkhaz) violations of the 1994 Moscow Agreement. Karasin indicated he was willing to consider this suggestion.

¶15. (C) Karasin warmly concluded the meeting by asking Bryza to remain in direct contact with him (Karasin), even while consulting with Russian ambassadors-at-large for conflict management while in the Caucasus.

¶16. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this message.
BURNS